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BERTRAM DOBELL

BOOKSELLER AND MAN OF LETTERS

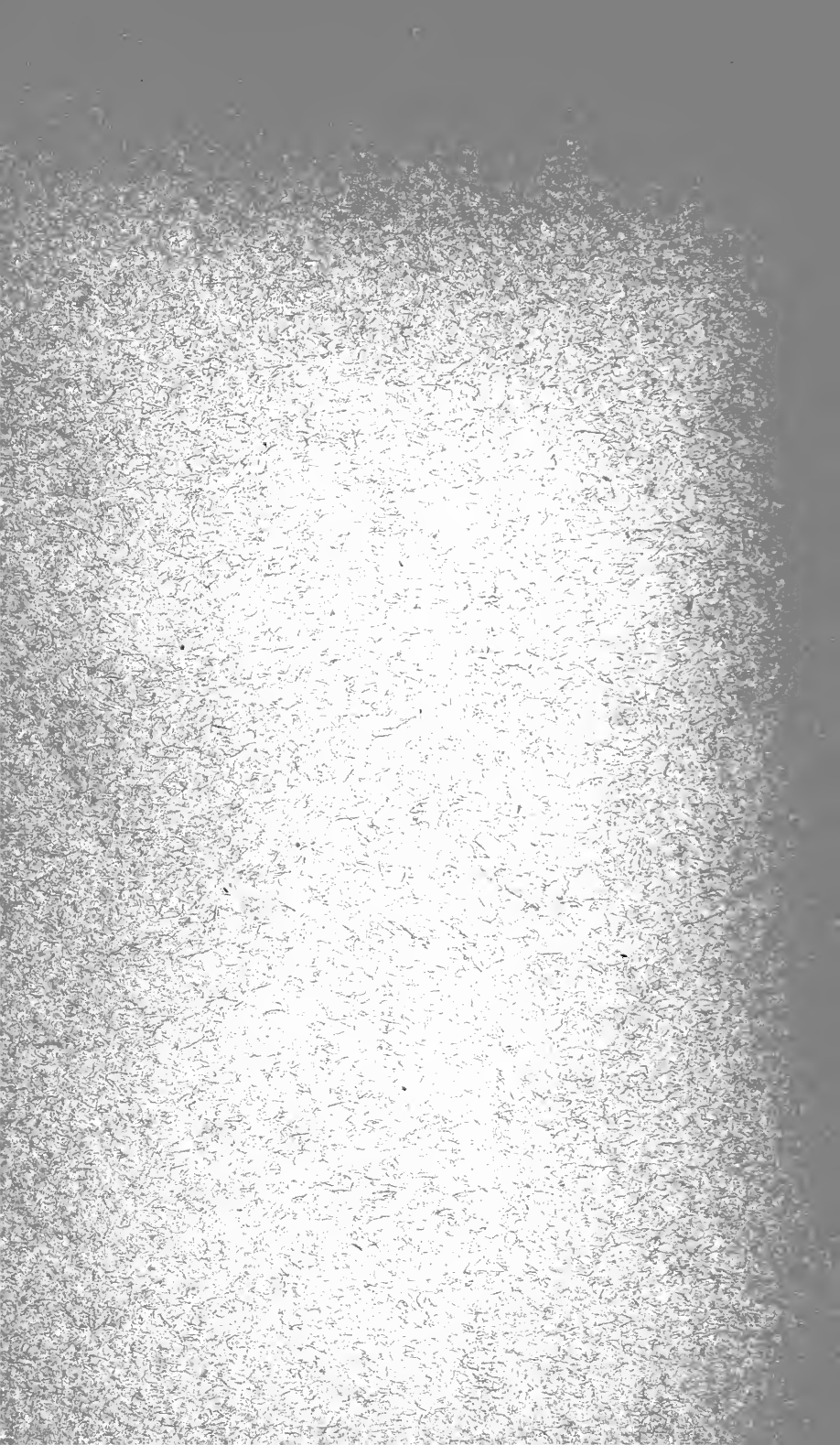
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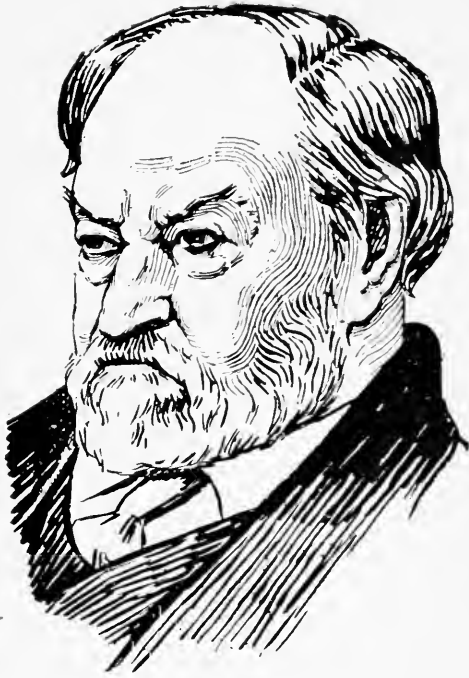
BERTRAM DOBELL

7, CHARING CROSS ROAD, LONDON, W.C.

1909



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BERTRAM DOBELL

From a drawing by Muriel Landseer

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BERTRAM DOBELL: BOOKSELLER AND MAN OF LETTERS.



WHATEVER of distinction or incompatibility in general between booksellers and men of letters may be implied in the title of this article, no one will be likely to deny that Bertram Dobell has earned—literally earned—as much right to the latter term as to the former. His shop, in the heart of London, is known to every bibliophile, and is the best of starting-points for one of those rambles amongst the many old book-shops of the city in which the soul of the book-hunter delights. And the owner of that shop is himself an author and publisher also; a poet of no mean order—one who has even dared to resent (in verse) the imputation of being a minor poet; he is an “excavator of royal mummy-pits of verse,” to whose labours therein, certain “inheritors of unfulfilled renown”—unfulfilled for nearly three centuries at least—owe their heritage to-day; he is a critic of great insight and sympathy—an authority even in certain fields which he has made his own—whose contributions to our knowledge of Elia and his contemporaries make up a most delightful volume; and it is mainly owing to his efforts that the author of “The City of Dreadful Night” has obtained to-day that recognition of his genius denied to him, or at least given only in scanty measure, during his lifetime. Such are a few of Bertram Dobell’s claims to the title of a man of letters.

Were it not that a juster appreciation of his literary work and of the difficulties which have hedged its production—one must add, too, of the judgment with which he seized the opportunities which his business gave him—can only be thus gathered,

no further allusion would have been made here to the commercial side of his connection with literature. As it is, the baldest of facts relating thereto must suffice.

And, indeed, Mr. Dobell is so modest as to the success he has attained—whether for himself, the honourable company of second-hand booksellers, or the world of letters—and so reticent concerning his own early struggles and the years of thwarted hopes, that one has, perforce, to be satisfied with little first-hand information relative to these matters. He has a way of evading leading questions on the subject—or of answering them in a fashion which leaves the questioner as wise as he was at first. Searching through a correspondence extending over some years with him, one comes across many a shrewd remark or sane criticism of matters literary—pertaining to his own work or that of other people; but as to himself, and the grim struggle from youth to middle-age, only a stray hint here or there. “Something may have to be said about that some day,” he writes in one of these letters, “and possibly I may myself do something of the kind before I go under; but the time has not yet arrived.” Now and then one may get a glimpse where a corner of the curtain is lifted; but before one can gather much definite detail it has fallen again. “I received very little education,” he remarks in another letter, “and I had to go very early indeed to work in order to earn a little money to help to keep the family going.” And again: “My father became a cripple early in life through an attack of paralysis, and consequently my poor mother, myself, and my brothers had a very hard time of it.” And here is a passage where he forgets himself, and becomes, for him, almost garrulous. “I had to work at the most laborious and uncongenial tasks,” he writes, “and it was not till I was nearly thirty that I was able, with my scanty savings, to open a stationer’s and newsvendor’s shop in Kentish Town. For a good many years after this the struggle for mere existence took up most of my time, so that it was not till I was nearly

fifty that I was able partially to devote myself . . . to literary pursuits."

During those twenty years, whose lapse Mr. Dobell bridges with a curt sentence, that little peddling "stationer's and newsvendor's" business had been transformed—with what uphill work and battling against discouragement one can only guess—into one which every bibliophile in the kingdom, and many a one outside it, knows. In his "Bookworm's Confession" the owner himself speaks of his books with the loving pride of the collector:—

My crowded bookroom gives me greater pleasure
Than misers from their money-bags can gain.
Old tomes I love most with their time-worn covers,
Quaint printing and dark paper stained with age;
About them a peculiar magic hovers,
Such as I find not in the modern page.
I love the odd, the quaint, and the fantastic—
All that your men of "common sense" decline;
Such treasures with a joy enthusiastic
I greet and prize as connoisseurs old wine.
Old plays are there, old poems, old romances,
Things that the busy world has long forgot;
Books full of strange and undigested fancies,
By brains half mad and half inspired begot.
It holds a thousand volumes none would value
Save such another "dry-as-dust" as I;

and it also holds many a volume, one may add, which the "dry-as-dust" values so much that he puts upon them—perhaps because he "greet and prizes" them so dearly, and prefers not to part with them—a price which, to the whilom "news vendor in Kentish Town," would have seemed a fortune in itself.

Before leaving Dobell, the bookseller, amongst his stock-in-trade, and turning to Dobell, the author, publisher, and restorer of lost literary reputations, it may be worth while quoting the opinions of two other writers as to the man and his business; particularly as they refer to one or two matters in connection with the latter not hitherto mentioned, and also

because their views may serve as a preface to the consideration of the bookseller as a man of letters.

Amongst the essays in that delightful volume "From a Cornish Window," the author, A. T. Quiller-Couch, devotes one to Mr. Dobell and his literary discoveries—particularly those of the MSS. of Traherne's Works and the proof-sheets of Goldsmith's "Traveller." Introducing his subject he says:

"Mr. Dobell has in the course of his life laid the Republic of Letters under many obligations. To begin with, he loves his trade, and honours the wares in which he deals, and so continues the good tradition that should knit writers, printers, vendors and purchasers of books together as partakers of an excellent mystery. He studies—and on occasion will fight for—the whims as well as the convenience of his customers. It was he who took arms against the Westminster City Council in defence of the out-of-door stall, the classic "sixpenny box," and at least brought off a drawn battle. He is at pains to make his second-hand catalogues better reading than half the new books printed, and they cost us nothing. He has done also his pious share of service to good literature"

And the writer of an article on "The Makers of Books," which appeared in the *Pall Mall* for November, 1908, writes thus:—

"Shall we take another type of bookseller and subject him to a kindly scrutiny? Saving your patience, there could hardly be a better instance than a man who, in dealing with second-hand wares, has struck an original line of his own. In this Latin Quarter of ours—the one spot where Mürger's Colin with his book-burst pockets would have been thoroughly at home—Mr. Bertram Dobell has more claims than seniority to be considered representative. He has done more to widen our acquaintance of poets and playwrights in the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras than perhaps any other living man. To him we owe Traherne and Storde, fine singers both, who had survived in manuscript only, and might have gone unlaurelled down to dusty death but for his discernment. Out of the files of the old *London Magazine* he has rescued and identified many unknown pieces from the pen of Lamb; and he has recovered more than one old English play which looks like giving its author a place alongside Webster and Dekker. Of late, scouring through fresh piles of unprinted manuscripts, he came across two manuscript versions of Sidney's 'Arcadia'—each differing from each, and both from the final version we so freely discuss and rarely read.

One or two things of moment relating to the origin of that fine romance have come to light through his happy agency; and we may say the same with regard to the difficult and narrow field of Shakespearean biography. As for minor gleanings in this and similar fields, they are many and valuable, and are to find their way soon into another published volume. All this is a signal achievement for a man who spent a youth of grinding poverty and scanty education. He was nearly thirty when he broke away from a soulless occupation, and set out with a ten-pound note to learn the arduous and difficult trade of a dealer in books. In the conversations I have had with him at sundry times he confesses to something over sixty years of age, and an unbroken habit of reading from five to six hours a day. This is the secret of it all—complete absorption in the one pursuit, the love of books, first for their own sake, and secondly as a medium for honest dealing with one's fellow-men. On their own merits, as George Colman said, modest men are dumb. The one thing on which Mr. Dobell prides himself is that he was of some service during life to that melancholy and distracted soul, 'B. V.' Thomson; and if only for the part he played in sustaining and encouraging him, long before his means enabled him to publish Thomson's poems, all who know 'The City of Dreadful Night,' and the circumstances of the author's life, will hold Mr. Dobell in grateful remembrance. As he says himself, 'The thing that galled me when I was young was to be chained to a thankless and sordid trade where I could never call my brain my own; and if I have had an ambition gratified in life, it was to feel that I had justified my life by doing some good to other men, and, above all else, to that fine, sad singer.' It is an eloquent vindication of a life of hard work."

Mr. Dobell's first appearance as an author was before a small but select audience, with a privately-printed little volume of verse which bore the title of "Rosemary and Pansies." The favour with which it was received was such that shortly afterwards he reprinted and published it—with some omissions and a great many additions. The various pieces which it contains are evidently the occasional work of many years and many moods. In certain of them the influence of his friend "B. V." Thomson is plain—or, otherwise, they show that the two poets had much sympathy of temperament and held many ideas in common. A note of melancholy, of disillusion—an echo of the old-world *vanitas vanitatum*—is predominant throughout the book—but happily it is not the

only one. Humour, satire, pathos, fancy, all inspire his muse in turn. Some of the epigrams and translations are delicious. But by common consent the fifty, or so, sonnets—all but two or three of the true Shakesperean form—contain the best of Mr. Dobell's verse. The one entitled "Sleep and Death" has been quoted so often that it must be familiar to most lovers of true poetry. It is worthy of inclusion in the choicest anthology. The one on "Bach's Second Concerto"—reminiscent of Keats in each line of the octave—is, perhaps, not so well known, and for that reason is quoted here:—

What fresh and breezy joyousness is here,
 What youthful spirit, what rapture of delight,
 What scorn of baseness, what contempt of fear!
 How it doth put all sombre thoughts to flight!
 Once more the world is full of old romance,
 Once more the jarring keys are all in tune,
 Once more in woodland scenes the fairies dance,
 And desolate winter turns to glorious June!
 Ah! could man's life to such a tune be set,
 Its dull beat changed for these exultant strains,
 What room were there for sorrow or regret,
 Or who could doubt that God exists and reigns? . . .
 The music dies—and I am sad again,
 But with a tenderer grief, a milder pain.

Whilst speaking of Mr. Dobell's poetry it may, perhaps, be of interest to quote here two unpublished pieces of his which he has written on the fly-leaves of two of his books which I have the happy fortune to possess. A man who has been at such pains to glean and garner the scattered verse of others should not be allowed to let his own fall by the way-side and be forgotten. The first is as follows:—

Though I must hold that life, if viewed aright,
 Is but a sinister and evil gift,
 Bestowed on man by fate's caprice or spite
 Which cares not to what maelstrom he may drift,
 Yet there are times when hours of pure delight
 A recompense for much ill-fortune bring,
 When we attain our nature's noblest height,
 And heaven and earth one glorious anthem sing.

These periods of delight unheralded
Come to us from no source that we may know ;—
Tell they of ancient Eden's vanishèd,
Or do they future halcyon times foreshow ?
Or teach us what man's common life might be
Could he his soul from evil passions free ?

And this is the second, a sonnet entitled " Ideal Beauty " :—

That world the poet and the artist view
Through eyes long trained its beauty to admire,
Is but a shadowed path or avenue
To that untrodden realm their hearts desire :
All beauty thus of ideal beauty speaks,
Filling the soul with longings infinite
For what it ne'er may find, yet ever seeks,
And finding not can know no true delight.
The sun, when shining in its fullest splendour,
Much more conceals than shows of loveliness ;
Nor can a Claude Lorraine or Shelley render,
How'er he strive, his vision's fine excess :
Yet rarely, in the moonlight or the dawn,
The vision comes—though ere well seen 'tis gone.

" Charles Lamb remarks light-heartedly in one of his letters, ' What should we do when booksellers break ? We should rejoice.' What, then, is left for us to do when booksellers write good books ? " Thus Mr. E. V. Lucas prefaces a review of Mr. Dobell's " Sidelights on Charles Lamb "—than which title a more fitting one for such a book, by the way, it would be difficult to find ; as difficult, perhaps, as to find any lover of the best in our literature—and hence of Charles Lamb—to whom the book does not appeal. For, even when these ' Sidelights ' are turned, not so much upon Lamb as upon his friends and contemporaries, there is, at least, always a reflection upon the loveable Elia himself : a reflection which—Shade of him who first inventoried *books which are no books*—is *not* a reflection !

The origin of this book was rather curious. Certain MSS. once belonging to one of Lamb's friends—Thomas Manning—had been purchased by Mr. Dobell, and a perusal of them

gave him the idea that an interesting book upon Lamb and his friends might be compiled, taking these MSS. as a basis. Before beginning the book, however, he bethought him of a set of the *London Magazine* which he had long kept by him with the intention of some time examining them. And a search made now through these convinced him that they contained much matter by or relating to Lamb, which had never been made use of by his several editors. This matter, when arranged with some degree of order, and certain other particulars of interest which came to hand, or were brought out by further incidental research, made up the volume as published; whilst the MSS. that had originated it had, perforce, to be left for a second volume which it is to be hoped may some day appear.

"Sidelights on Charles Lamb" is full of curious and valuable matter, from the first page of the preface to the last of the book. The very embarrassment of riches makes quotation difficult. In the first chapter, for instance, there is much of interest with reference to

that enigmatical being, Thomas Griffiths Wainewright, cleverest of coxcombs and prince of poisoners! It was a strange irony of fate which brought together, in what must at one time have been a close intimacy, the man who, of all men, had in him the greatest and deepest spring of humanity, and the one whose actions were to prove that he was the most inhuman and remorseless of criminals.

Here, too, are certain extracts from an article written by Wainewright himself upon Lamb:—

What can I say of thee more than all know? that thou hadst the gaiety of a boy with the knowledge of a man; as gentle a heart as ever sent tears to the eyes. . . . How wittily would he mistake your meaning, and put in a conceit most seasonably out of season! His talk, without affectation, was compressed, like his beloved Elizabethans, even unto obscurity; like grains of fine gold, his sentences would beat out into whole sheets. . . .

And thus he concludes, dwelling upon the last visit which he paid to Lamb:—

His pipe had gone out ; he held it to the flame of the candle, but in vain.

It was empty ! His mind had been wandering. " Even so silently," said he, " may my fiery spark steal from its vehicle of ashes and clay."

I felt oppressed. Many things had contributed lately to break and daunt my once elastic spirits. I rose to go ; he shook me by the hand, neither of us spoke : with that I went my way—*and I saw him no more.*

How much is lost to this miserable world, which knew him not while it possessed him ! I knew him—I, who am left to weep,—Eheu ! Eliam ! Vale !

" Kind, light-hearted Wainwright !" Mr. Dobell adds, with reference to a letter of Lamb in which that friendly phrase occurs. " One is glad to think that Lamb died before the disclosure of his friend's heartlessness and depravity."

One of the most delightful and characteristically Elian of the pieces which Mr. Dobell has exhumed from the dead *London Magazine* is " An appeal from the Shades." Although it cannot be said that this was undeniably written by Lamb, a collation of all the evidence brought forward by Mr. Dobell would seem to leave very little doubt that it is really his. Before giving one quotation from it, however, an extract from another article—in imitation of Lamb—written by Horace Smith may be of interest. It reads like a fragment from the " Appeal " itself :—

" Death . . . is the sleeping partner of life, and we give ourselves up to him every night, without any compunctious visitings ;—we know not, when we enter them, that the sheets of our bed shall not prove our winding-sheets, yet our hearts quake not. We walk arm-in-arm with him almost every hour, and when his gentle hand draws the curtain around us, and covers us up in our narrow bed, what is it but to fall asleep, and to have a little longer to wait for the daylight !

One final extract from the " Appeal," and this delightful volume must be put aside :—

" The unforgotten earth has spells potent as those of Endor's hag, that sometimes pluck us from our graves. The summer's springing flowers, with their stirring roots, tug at the buried heart, The merry song of birds—friendly, family voices—the chime of

village bells, and melodious fall of waters, have echoes in the spiritual ear—

— True as the shell
To the old ocean's melancholy swell.

“The old familiar faces and homely images have their camera in the ghostly organ, and awaken yearnings stronger than the tomb. . . . The cruel, the unjust, and the crafty, remain in the sullenest shades below ; but the gentle spirit of love is soothed by haunting the old home and its hearths. These after-relishes of life—these holiday furloughs the kind Death allows us,—and they serve to sweeten some darker passages in our coffin-dreams. . . .

“Fill up one welcome cup to the home-sick exile that stealeth lovingly amongst you. Soothe the naked phantasy a dream-while, with his accustomed place. Let the amicable phantom dally a season with the old images,—and then, with your kind farewells and a sigh and an alas ! commend him to a peaceful slumber on the Lethæan shore !”

Of that “pious share of service to good literature,” as “Q” puts it, which Mr. Dobell has from time to time undertaken, there is no doubt that he would himself consider that to be the most worthy which was done in memory of his friend “B. V.” Thomson. “Whatever I have accomplished,” he wrote me some years ago, “there is nothing I am more proud of than that I was able to befriend during his lifetime the unfortunate author of “The City of Dreadful Night,” and there is no reason to think that he has since then changed this opinion.

The work, both in prose and verse, of Thomson, studied in connection with the story of his unhappy life—which would incidentally include that of the relations between himself and Mr. Dobell—is a subject too wide to be entered upon in an article so short as this. What can be said here of the friendship between the two men must be of the briefest. Indeed, the story in full of that part of Thomson's life has yet to be told, for the one man who, from his close intimacy with the unfortunate genius, could speak with authority upon it has, as yet, said little but what the world knew or had already guessed upon the matter.

Beyond his pen-name of "Bysshe Vanolis," Mr. Dobell knew absolutely nothing of Thomson when he sought and obtained an introduction to the poet whose verse, for its power and originality, he had long admired. The acquaintance thus made grew later into a firm friendship—a fortunate thing for both. For Thomson's circumstances at that time were almost desperate; he was practically homeless, he had alienated his old friends, and his means of livelihood were precarious—to the point, on occasions, of not seeming to exist at all. In these sore straits Mr. Dobell befriended him so far as he was able—and Thomson's peculiar temperament and besetting weakness would let him. He used what influence he then possessed to get his friend's verse accepted; and helped him, as best he could, through the many difficulties which the poet met—or brought upon himself—during the last years of his sad life.

And so to him fell the obligations of friendship, and the honour of establishing Thomson's true place amongst the poets of the last century. The task of collecting, editing, and publishing, when his means allowed him, all that his friend had written was to him a labour of love. "His devotion to the memory of his friend," Mr. Davidson said some years ago, "is one of the most beautiful things in contemporary letters." And though one may feel sure that, sooner or later, the genius of the "second James Thomson" must have been recognized, and the enthusiasm of the few who had foretold it from the first have prevailed, none the less is it true that it is mainly due to Mr. Dobell's "devotion to his memory" that Thomson's rank amongst modern singers is now assured.

It would be hard to find a greater contrast between any two of our English poets—in life, creed, temperament, and the form and spirit of their verse—than is to be found between "B. V." Thomson and Thomas Traherne. Except that each is posthumously indebted to Mr. Dobell for the same service there is scarcely a point of similarity in the

careers of the two men. Thomson was the poet of pessimism *par excellence*—if the *cliché* in such a connection is admissible. The sad music of his verse had its every chord in the undertones of his own life; the gloom in which the puppets of his fancy moved was the shadow of that in which his own soul dwelt and starved, until even the will to struggle toward the light without perished. The figure, the character, the circumstances of Traherne are all, as Mr. Dobell has shown, in striking antithesis. "His verse," says Mr. John Masefield, in a review of the volume, "smacks of his age, telling of a slow courtly life passed among terraces and old music, but his thought is a thing shining through it like a bright angel singing of immortal things. There is scarce a poem in this beautiful book that is not glorious with strange light, and beautiful with the sweep of coloured wings. The rare poet, full of a 'fine madness,' is evident in every verse. . . . Throughout his work one finds a strange, almost pagan joy and wonder . . . in the 'miracle of the grass,' and that more lovely miracle of childhood."

The story of the recovery of Traherne's unsigned MSS. nearly two and a half centuries after his death, and the clearing-up of the mystery of their authorship, adds another—and a most suggestive one—to the curiosities of literature. The salient points only, of that story, can be mentioned here. The MSS. first passed, it would seem, into the hands of his brother Philip, and thence to a family with whom Philip had some connection, probably by marriage. Here, for more than two centuries, they must have remained, until, some twenty years ago, the property of that family was dispersed. Who possessed them during the next eight or nine years has not been ascertained, but in the latter part of 1896, or the early months of 1897, two out of the three MSS. volumes "had descended to the street bookstall, that last hope of books and manuscripts in danger of being consigned to the waste-paper mills." From this fate they

were redeemed, for a few pence—to add a tardy and curious supplemental chapter to the history of English literature. But even then, though the legacy of fine verse, and still finer prose, had been recovered, the perverse fate which had kept it hidden so long still withheld the name of its author, and would have passed on the title and honour to another. For Mr. W. T. Brooke, who had discovered and bought the manuscripts, when he found time to examine them, “could hardly imagine that writings so admirable could be the work of an unknown author ; and at length came to the conclusion, from the fact that the poems resembled those of Henry Vaughan in their subjects and partly in their sentiments, that they must be his.” The late Dr. Grosart, who purchased the manuscripts from Mr. Brooke, after some hesitation, came to the same opinion, and on the strength of it prepared a new and elaborate edition of Vaughan, incorporating the matter contained in the two manuscript volumes, the publication of which “complete” edition was only prevented by his own death. The attention of Mr. Dobell was now, for the first time, drawn to these two volumes, and he in turn became their purchaser. Later, when a portion of Dr. Grosart’s library was being sold at Sotheby’s, another odd fact came to light ; the missing third volume was found to have been in Dr. Grosart’s own possession without his seeming to have been aware that it was by the same writer, “though nothing was needed but to compare it with the other volumes in order to see that all three were in the same handwriting.” This volume was also bought by Mr. Dobell.

The rest of the strange history of these manuscripts, the reasons which led Mr. Dobell, after a careful study of them, to differ from the opinion that they were written by Vaughan, the long search for clues as to the authorship, the various pieces of evidence linked together by Mr. Dobell and Mr. Brooke—whose valuable assistance, after he had been

converted to Mr. Dobell's opinion, is gratefully acknowledged—are all set forth in detail in the excellent introduction to the volume of Traherne's Poems which Mr. Dobell published in 1903. It had taken six years, from the discovery of the unsigned manuscripts on a street bookstall, to put to them the name of the man who had been dead and forgotten for nearly two and a half centuries! "Will the reader," says Mr. Dobell, "accuse me of undue vanity if I say that it was with a good deal of self-satisfaction, and no little rejoicing, that I welcomed this confirmation of the opinion which I had formed solely upon critical grounds?" It is hardly likely that he will.

Traherne was a true and an original poet, an anticipator even of many moderns. He has his well-marked limitations and his verse is not free from certain of the faults—as we regard them—which belonged to the poetic fashions of his age. He is a mystic, but his mysticism is of a kind which has a germ in every human soul. In most it soon becomes lost; in Traherne it grew with his years and the faculty of expression. The sense of the joy, the beauty, the mystery of life, and the exaltation of the religious mystic were grafted upon the elemental wonder of childhood in him; and the spirit of his message was such as could burst asunder the artificial bonds of his time, and that message was given with a simplicity, a directness, and a felicity that none of his contemporaries could achieve. His very abstractions take on the guise of realities—nay, rather, they transfigure things material until our duller senses get a glimpse of the halo which surrounded them to his own.

The curious anticipations of Blake, Wordsworth, and other later singers, with which his verse, both in form and thought, abounds, have been commented upon by, perhaps, every critic of Traherne. Here, for instance, is a passage which might have been written by that modern of moderns, Whitman. Traherne is speaking of the "Children of my People:"—

Make them mine, O God, even while I have them,
My lovely companions, like Eve in Eden !
So much my treasure that all other wealth is without them
 But dross and poverty.
Do they not adorn and beautifie the World
And gratify my Soul which hateth Solitude !
Thou, Lord, hast made Thy servant a sociable creature, for which I
 praise Thy name,
A lover of company, a delighter in equals ;
 Replenish the inclination which Thyself hath implanted
And give me eyes
To see the beauty of that life and comfort
Wherewith those by their actions
 Inspire the nations.
Their Markets, Tillage, Courts of Judicature, Marriage Feasts and
 Assemblies, Navys, Armies,
Priests and Sabbaths, Trades and Business, the voice of the Bride-
 groom, Musical Instruments, the light of Candles, and the
 grinding of Mills
Are comfortable, O Lord ! let them not cease.

But finer, and more characteristic of Traherne's muse, are such stanzas as these at the beginning of his "Salutation :"—

 These little limbs,
 These eyes and hands which here I find,
 These rosy cheeks wherewith my life begins,
 Where have ye been ? behind
What curtain were ye from me hid so long,
Where was, in what abyss, my speaking tongue ?

 When silent I
 So many thousand, thousand years
 Beneath the dust did in a chaos lie,
 How could I smiles or tears
Or lips, or hands, or eyes, or ears perceive ?
Welcome, ye treasures, which I now receive.

 I that so long
 Was nothing from eternity,
 Did little think such joys as ear or tongue
 To celebrate or see ;
Such sounds to hear, such hands to feel, such feet,
Beneath the skies on such a ground to meet.

Or these from his poem entitled "Speed :"—

 True living wealth did flow
 In crystal streams below
 My feet, and trilling down

In pure, transparent, soft, sweet, melting pleasures,
 Like precious and diffusive treasures
 At once my body fed and soul did crown.

I was as high and great
 As kings are in their seat,
 All other things were mine
 The world my house, the creatures were my goods,
 Fields, mountains, valleys, woods,
 Men and their arts to make me rich combine.

As to his literary kinship to Herbert, Vaughan, and Crashaw, let his editor speak:—

Traherne alone [of the four] has that "impetuous rush of a mind . . . lifted into ecstasy beyond itself," which Milton regarded as the chief requisite of poetry. Herbert has a finer sense of proportion, a keener perception of the importance of form and measure; Vaughan appeals more strongly to the common sympathies of mankind; while Crashaw, when at his best, has more passages of quintessential poetry, than Traherne; but none of them has the vitality, the sustained enthusiasm, the power imparted by intense conviction, which we find in our author . . . Traherne's style, allowing for the nature of his subjects, is always simple and direct. His aim is to affect the minds of his readers by the weight of his thought and the enthusiasm of his utterance, not to astonish them by far-fetched metaphors or delight them with dulcet melodies. He has no ornament for ornament's sake, and he never attempts to clothe his "naked simple thought" in silken raiment or cloth of gold.

Four years after the publication of Traherne's verse Mr. Dobell redeemed the promise made then by editing and printing the second of the three volumes of manuscript which had come by such strange chances into his hands. A few extracts from the "Centuries of Meditations" he had already given in the preface to the "Poems," and the new volume had been eagerly expected. Scarcely a critic who had reviewed the poems but had expressed a wish to see the prose in full. Certain obscure, if able, theological essays—and a remarkable though never appreciated volume entitled "Christian Ethics," which was passing through the press at the time of his too early death—had preserved the name of Traherne from utter oblivion as a writer of prose, but no one dreamed—until the appearance of the few passages

already mentioned—that such glorious prose as was here produced could remain buried, unknown for two and a half centuries; that writings fit to be placed beside the masterpieces of Jeremy Taylor and John Bunyan had been rescued from a street stall and only escaped destruction by a lucky accident.

Most of the critics of this book go even further than Mr. Dobell when he claims that Traherne was, at least, as great a prose writer as a poet,—and one is inclined to agree with them. One finds here the most noticeable features of his verse; the same imageries clothed in lucid and melodious phrases; the same mystical exaltation combined with an intense sense of the joyousness of life and the common, continual and unregarded beauty of the world; an imagination for whose will the very heavens were bare until hung with the ethereal tapestry of a visionary's dream; and a practical sympathy with his fellow-men which evolved, from a narrow and austere creed, the iterated message that "joy was duty and love was law." But his genius moves more freely in the medium of prose; the fetters which, though golden, were still fetters, and in the fashion of his age, hamper him here no longer.

The "Centuries of Meditations" were, according to Mr. Dobell, intended by Traherne as a manual of devotion. But, as one reviewer truly remarks, "there is not a trace of harsh asceticism in this rapt, eager soul, whose whole being seems to thrill and palpitate with joy. Paragraph after paragraph is concerned with the great theme—how to enjoy the world aright." And thus Traherne upon that subject—one of which he never wearies:—

"You never enjoy the world aright till you see how a sand exhibiteth the wisdom and power of God . . . till the Sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the Heavens and crowned with the Stars; and perceive yourself to be the sole heir of the whole world, and more than so, because men are in it who are everyone sole heirs as well as you"

“You never enjoy the world aright till you so love the beauty of enjoying it that you are covetous and earnest to persuade others to enjoy it The world is a mirror of infinite beauty, yet no man sees it. It is a Temple of Majesty, yet no man regards it. It is a region of Light and Peace, did not men disquiet it. It is the Paradise of God. It is more to man since he is fallen than it was before. It is the place of angels and the Gate of Heaven.”

One more example of Traherne's prose only can be given. It is from the third “Century” of his “Meditations,” and deals with that “lovely miracle of childhood” to which he recurs again and again:—

“Will you see the infancy of this sublime and celestial greatness? Those pure and virgin apprehensions I had in my infancy, and that divine light wherewith I was born, are the best unto this day wherein I can see the universe Certainly Adam in Paradise had not more sweet and curious apprehensions of the world than I when I was a child.

“All appeared new and strange at first, inexpressibly rare and delightful and beautiful. I was a little stranger which at my entrance into the world was saluted and surrounded with innumerable joys I was entertained like an angel with the works of God in their splendour and glory; I saw all in the peace of Eden; heaven and earth did sing my Creator's praises, and could not make more melody to Adam than to me. All Time was an Eternity, and a perpetual Sabbath. Is it not strange that an infant should be heir of the whole world, and see those mysteries which the books of the learned never unfold?”

“The corn was orient and immortal wheat which never could be reaped, nor was ever sown. I thought it had stood from everlasting to everlasting. The dust and stones of the street were as precious as gold: the gates were at first the end of the world

“Young men were glittering and sparkling angels, and maids strange seraphic pieces of life and beauty. Boys and girls tumbling in the streets were moving jewels: I knew not that they were born, or that they should die The City seemed to stand in Eden, or to be built in Heaven. The streets were mine, the temple was mine, the people were mine, their clothes and gold and silver were mine, as much as their sparkling eyes, fair skins, and ruddy faces. The skies were mine, and so were the sun and moon and stars, and all the world was mine; and I the only spectator and enjoyer of it. I knew no churlish proprieties, nor bounds nor divisions, but all proprieties and divisions were mine, all treasures and the possessors of them.”

Scarcely had Mr. Dobell solved the mystery of the

Traherne manuscripts, and finished the heavy editorial work that was necessary before the two volumes could be published, than he had the good fortune to make another fine literary discovery in a somewhat similar way, and of a like character to the first; with results only second in importance to those with regard to Traherne. The discovery was that of the Strode manuscripts, and the results were a notable addition to the literature of the early Seventeenth Century and the restoration of Strode to his own once-recognized place amongst the poets of that period. For the two cases differed in this, that whilst Traherne had been unknown as a poet to his generation, Strode had enjoyed a considerable reputation in his day and had then been undeservedly forgotten. Undeservedly; since much contemporary verse inferior to most of his had been preserved and become a part of our literature. Why the work of a writer so well known in his day should have been so soon forgotten, it is impossible to say. Many hitherto unpublished poems of his had undoubtedly passed from hand to hand, in manuscript form, amongst the wits, and in the literary circles, of that period. Mr. Dobell claims that "the poems of no author of that time were more frequently copied into the manuscript common-place books of the first half of the seventeenth century;" and much of his verse was printed in various contemporary miscellanies, either with no name attached or with that of some other writer (Mr. Dobell brings forward strong evidence that the well-known "Song in praise of Melancholy"—"Hence all our vain delights"—so long ascribed to Fletcher, is really Strode's); his play, the "Floating Island," had been performed before the King, and, ten years after his own death, had been published. Then neglect and, at last, practical oblivion. The rest of his verse—if, indeed, it is the rest—during the whole of this eventful period of our history, beginning with the time when Charles I. lost his head and ending with the time when Edward VII. kept *his*—lay, in manuscript, in some

musty nook or other—to come at last into Mr. Dobell's hands.

There is a place—so Ariosto sings,
 A treasury for lost and missing things :
 Lost human wits have places there assigned them,
 And they who lose their senses there may find them.
 But where's this place, this storehouse of the age?
 The Moon, says he—

So Goldsmith—but if for “senses” one reads “honours” that “treasury” seems to lie, in our day, but a short ramble from his own beloved Fleet Street !

That there may still be other undiscovered poems of Strode—or other worthy poets—in existence, is suggested by the manner in which the manuscripts of those now published came into the possession of Mr. Dobell. They were bought in two lots, on separate occasions, and came from different sources. Amongst the contents—for they contained much other unpublished matter, which may yet be seen in print, in addition to that written by Strode—were certain lyrics which bore the name of this writer, and these seemed of such merit to Mr. Dobell that he was led to make another research—this time into the known work, and the facts connected with the life, of a man hitherto barely known to him only as the author of a play which few people knew of, and still fewer had ever read. Thus it chanced that a bulky volume, containing the newly-discovered poems, his play, the “Floating Island,” such scattered matter as could be gleaned as to his life, and a discriminating criticism of the writings of William Strode, has since been published—to the surprise, no doubt, following as it did so soon after the Traherne volumes, of such critics as the one who wrote so confidently a few years ago: “We know that there does not lurk another Crashaw contemned, or another Henry Vaughan disregarded, or another George Herbert misplaced.”

Strode's art was essentially lyrical, and admittedly not free from certain of the literary faults of his time. The

usual laboured conceits, which sound so insincere to our ears—as no doubt they often did to theirs—are to be found in his verse; but there is also much genuine poetry—ingenious and delightful in his songs and odes, solemn and affecting in his elegies. Amongst the latter the following, entitled “An Epitaph,” may be noted:—

Keep well this sacred Pawn, thou bed of stone,
For thou must render it a Saint; each bone
Shall be requir'd, the very shroud shall rise
Turn'd to a robe of light. Spend not your eyes,
Ye that lov'd her and virtue! Tho' the mould
Contain them both, tho' charity grow cold
Since she is so, yet know that after sleep
She'll rise more fresh, and memory will keep
Due watch about her to preserve her name.
Until her nature wake, death cannot tame
The life of hope. Be sure that where she lies
The grave is but an usher to the skies.

The ode, “In Commendation of Musick,” is a fine piece of work. Here is the last stanza:—

O lull me, lull me, charming ayre,
My senses rock with wonder sweete;
Like snowe on wooll thy fallings are,
Soft, like a spirit's, are thy feete:
Greife who need feare
That hath an care?
Down lett him lye,
And slumbring dye,
And change his soule for harmony.

So, too, is the lyric beginning:—

As I out of a casement sent
Mine eyes as wandering as my thought,

with the last fanciful sigh which followed the unknown lady as she passed from his sight, and the young student turned again to his books on divinity:—

Pygmalion hold thine Image fast,
'Tis something to enjoy Love so;
Narcissus thou a shaddowe hast,
At least thereby to cheat thy woe;

But I no likenesse can inferre.
 My pyning fancy to supply ;
 Nothing to love instead of her
 For feare of some idolatry.

And how many rustics have gone to town, since Strode wrote his delightful Devonshire dialect poem, and have told their adventures, on their return, in similar local Doric ?

The "Floating Island," his one known play, is, to say the least, curious and interesting. The following extract from it, with some of Mr. Dobell's own comments upon it, one feels compelled to give in full, for it is a really remarkable piece of imaginative writing :—

I do not know of any other passage in any poet or prose writer in which so many inventions and discoveries, which must at the time have seemed to be impossibilities, are so clearly foretold. The passage in question occurs in Act III. sc. iii. Queen Fancie, in favour of whom the rightful monarch, Prudentius, has been deposed, expresses thus her desire for novel inventions :—

Thus first ourselves must whet our own Invention,
 Else others will not stir. Men do not strive
 Methinkes to please me as they ought to do.
 No other rarities these many Ages
 But Powder, Printing, Seaman Card, and Watches ?
 So much vain dotage for the fond Elixir ?
 Why are not yet my Cristals malleable,
 To make our Gold no Gold, and soile the Di'mond ?
 Why want I instruments to measure out
 The Year, the Day, the Houre, without the help
 Of Sun, or turning of these tedious wheeles ?
 Nothing to carry me but Barges, Coaches ?
 Sedans and Litters ? through the Aire I'd passe
 By some new waftage. I must have my house
 Convey'd by wheeles and sailes and plummets hung
 In some deep pit, deep as the way is distant,
 To hurry me, my Family, and it,
 Whether I please. Ile travel like the Snaile
 With all my house, but swifter than the Faulcon.

Fuga. Rare Lady !

Conc. Ravishing Inventions !

Fan. Why have not I my beds stuff'd all with wind,
 Baths fill'd with Maydew, Flowers preserv'd till winter,
 As well as Snow till Summer : choisest fruits
 Growing and ripe in midst of January ?

Why have not I ponds running through my Cellars,
For Bottles and for Fish call'd by their names ?
Why not in drought an artificial rain,
Scatter'd by spowtes, to cheer my Paradise ?

Mem. I wish you had these things : I nere saw such.

Fan. Cheape I can have *Aeolian* bellowes made
Within the Bowles of *Andirons*, where the water
Shall blow the fire by which 'tis rarified.
I will have *Vaults* which shall convey my whispers
In steed of *Embassies* to foreign Nations ;
Places for *Ecchoes* to pronounce a speech,
Or give a *Suffrage* like a multitude :
Consorts well play'd by water ; *Pictures* taught
By secret *Organs* both to move and speak :
We spend ourselves too much upon the *Taylor* ;
I rather would new mould, new fashion *Nature*.

“May it not be said, almost without hyperbole, that within the last hundred years mankind has in very truth new-moulded and new-fashioned *Nature*, and in many of the ways which *Fancie* desired ? Her speech, indeed, almost forms a summing-up of the most remarkable scientific discoveries which have been made since the poet's time.”

Of certain other of Mr Dobell's contributions to literature and literary history there is space for only the briefest mention. “*The Partiall Law: a Tragi-comedy,*” is another notable addition to a long series of unpublished and inedited works of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, which he has unearthed in his burrowings amongst piles of old, half-illegible and apparently altogether worthless manuscripts, and which he proposes to issue from time to time. Admirers of Shelley will have read with interest his publication of, and a critique upon, the poets “*Letters to Elizabeth Hitchener,*” since, with the exception of a few copies issued years ago for private circulation—and hence practically unattainable—they had not before been published. His discovery of a complete manuscript copy of the “*Arcadia,*”* with many variations from the

* Since this was written Mr. Dobell has written an article entitled, “*New Light upon Sir Philip Sidney's 'Arcadia,'*” which appeared in the July number of the *Quarterly Review*. In the course of the article many passages are quoted from the newly-found manuscript, the most interesting of which is a short autobiographical

usual printed texts, made no little stir some years ago; whilst Goldsmith, as is but fitting, has also found his "treasury for lost and missing things" in the old bookseller's shop, an original draft of his "Prospect of Society," which turned up there, reappearing later, with many critical notes, in a little volume. His "Catalogue of Privately Printed Books," with its two thousand separate items, is one of the few bibliographical works which is of genuine interest to the average reader; for in addition to the usual technical details, its pages teem with quaint and out-of-the-way information, extracts from the books mentioned and notes, enlightening or humorous, by the compiler.

And for the future, one gathers from an occasional note in his writings, from his letters, and from talks with him, that, amongst others, books dealing with new matter that he has gathered from time to time respecting Shakspeare and Lamb and Hood, as well as a final life of "B. V." Thomson, and a monograph of Sydney Dobell, a true and fine poet who has lately fallen somewhat out of notice, are all works which he hopes to accomplish if health and energy will still serve him. A remarkable output for a man who received "very little education," and whose literary career can hardly be said to have commenced until he had nearly reached sixty years—one of which any man, with the whole of his life to devote to it, might well be proud. Considering this, and recalling a passage in one of his letters, "I have not achieved, and now never shall achieve what I once dreamed of doing," one wonders what really were the projects which occupied his thoughts, and the ambitions he cherished in the old "Kentish Town" days, or in the still gloomier period which preceded them.

account of himself, which Sir Philip Sidney gives under the assumed name of Philisides. There are also several poems by Sir Philip which have not previously been published. Mr. Dobell hopes before long to publish an edition of the "Arcadia," as it appears in the manuscripts which he has discovered.

Mr. Dobell lacks but some two years of the allotted span of threescore and ten; does not look his age within ten years; and does not talk like it within twenty—when his talk is of books, and the making of books, at least. Of a naturally reserved disposition, the experience which he bought with the best of his life and fifty years of toil and worry has not tended to make him wear his heart upon his sleeve—by way of habit, that is. But the enthusiasm of the true bibliophile and the instinct of the literary artist are yet his; in his own chosen domain he still knows the eagerness and joy of

Some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken.

So that one repeats hopefully the pious aspiration implied in the reviewer's query who wrote, "Who knows what forgotten genius, following Traherne's example, may yet come knocking at his door in Charing Cross Road?"

A LIST OF THE WORKS WRITTEN OR EDITED BY BERTRAM DOBELL.

A VOICE FROM THE NILE, and other Poems. By the late James Thomson ("B.V.") With a Memoir of the Author by Bertram Dobell. London: Reeves & Turner, 196 Strand. 1884. Crown 8vo, portrait, pp. xlix and 263.

[Though this was the first book of Thomson's, the contents of which were wholly selected and edited by Mr. Dobell, it may yet be mentioned that the proofs of the three previously issued volumes of his works ("The City of Dreadful Night, and other Poems," "Vanc's Story, Weddah and Om-el-Bonain, etc.," and "Essays and Phantasies,") passed through Mr. Dobell's hands, and that their contents were chosen by him, of course with the Author's concurrence. The Memoir of Thomson in this volume was the first of any importance which appeared in print. When only about a third part of the printed copies of this work had been disposed of, the remaining portion was destroyed by fire, as were also the greater portions of the copies of the second edition of "The City of Dreadful Night," "Essays and Phantasies," and Mr. Salt's "Life of Thomson."]

SHELLEY, A POEM: with other Writings relating to Shelley. By the late James Thomson ("B.V.") To which is added an ESSAY ON THE POEMS OF WILLIAM BLAKE, by the same Author. Printed for Private Circulation by Charles Whittingham & Co., at the Chiswick Press, 1884. 8vo, pp. xii and 128.

[This book was reviewed in the *Athenaeum* of August 1st, 1885. The following passage is extracted from that notice:—"The poem on Shelley is a well-conceived invention for the purpose of symbolizing that poet's typical position, and though not, on the whole, of high importance in point of writing or development, it has throughout a large measure of beauty. Here and there we find a pompous or ill-coined word, such as 'vastitude' or 'evocate.'" The metre is the harmonious and graceful seven-line stanza, which has too seldom been used since Chaucer gave the example of it in his, 'Troilus and Cryseid.' Of the prose writings on Shelley the majority deserve some attention even now, when so much has been written on the subject. The study of most practical importance is that 'On the Structure of Prometheus Unbound.' . . . [The review of Blake's Poems] is one of Thomson's best pieces of writing, containing many striking observations and turns of thought."]

ALASTOR; OR, THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE: and other Poems. By Percy Bysshe Shelley. A Facsimile Reprint of the Original Edition, first published in 1816. London: 1885: Reeves & Turner, 196 Strand, and B. Dobell, 62 Queen's Crescent, N.W. 12mo, pp. viii, vii and 101.

[It was intended to follow this reprint with a series of reproductions of the original editions of Shelley's works. In the following year, however, the Shelley Society was started, one of its chief objects being the reproduction of the original editions of Shelley's works, and therefore it was needless for Mr. Dobell to continue his enterprise.]

ALASTOR; OR, THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE: and other Poems. By Percy Bysshe Shelley. A Facsimile Reprint of the Original Edition, first published in 1816. London: Published for the Shelley Society by Reeves & Turner, 196 Strand. 1886. 12mo, pp. xlvi, vii and 101.

[The first edition of the reprint of "Alastor" having been exhausted, a second edition was undertaken at the request of the Shelley Society. The first had no editorial matter or notes, excepting a brief preface; but the editor's introduction and notes in this second edition occupy the first forty pages.]

THE WANDERING JEW. A Poem by Percy Bysshe Shelley. Edited by Bertram Dobell. [Motto.] London: Published for the Shelley Society by Reeves & Turner, 196 Strand. 1887. 8vo, pp. xxxii and 115.

[Before the publication of this edition of "The Wandering Jew" it had been supposed that the first intimation of its existence had appeared in 1831 in *Fraser's Magazine*. I discovered, however, that a notice of the poem with large extracts from it had previously appeared in the *Edinburgh Literary Journal* in 1829. In this notice many interesting particulars were given which did not appear in *Fraser's Magazine*. These particulars, with many other details respecting the poem and its origin, are given in the introduction and notes of the above work. The legend of the Wandering Jew exercised a great influence over Shelley's mind, and allusions to it constantly occur in his writings from the earliest to the latest. It is well known that Captain Medwin claimed to have written a large portion of the poem, but in the introduction reasons are given which go far to prove that he was mistaken. Medwin published in 1823 "Ahasuerus, the Wanderer: a Dramatic Legend, in six parts." So utterly inaccurate a writer was Medwin that it seems not impossible even that he confused this work with Shelley's "Wandering Jew," and so claimed to have written the latter. It is certain that whenever Shelley refers to the latter poem he always speaks of it as his own, and gives not the slightest hint that he was not the sole author.]

THE POETICAL WORKS OF JAMES THOMSON ("Bysshe Vanolis"). Edited by Bertram Dobell, with a Memoir of the Author. In two volumes. London: Reeves & Turner, 5 Wellington Street, Strand, and Bertram Dobell, Charing Cross Road. 1895. Vol. I., portrait, pp. xciii and 373; Vol. II., portrait, pp. vii and 446.

[This is the first, and at present only, complete edition of the poetical works of the now famous "B.V." It includes everything of any value by the author, and no future additions, excepting a few almost worthless scraps, can be made to it. Perhaps, indeed, the editor erred by including a few pieces which had better have been omitted. Many poems are included in the volumes which had not previously appeared in print. The memoir of Thomson is an enlarged and improved version of that which was prefixed to "A Voice from the Nile."]

BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL STUDIES. By James Thomson ("B.V."), Author of "The City of Dreadful Night," etc. London: Reeves and Turner, Wellington Street, Strand, and Bertram Dobell, 77 Charing Cross Road. 1896. Cr. 8vo, pp. xi and 483.

[This was intended to be the first volume of a collected edition of the prose works of "B.V." It was printed in the same style as the "Poetical Works," and the whole collection would have extended to six volumes. But

so far there has been little encouragement for the publication of the remainder of Thomson's prose writings, and up to the present time (1909) no more volumes have been issued. It is hoped, however, that it will be possible before long to proceed with the enterprise, as interest in the work of "B.V." seems to be growing, though but slowly. Mr Dobell hopes soon to publish, in a separate form, an enlarged and revised edition of the Memoir of Thomson which was prefixed to the "Poetical Works."]

THE CITY OF DREADFUL NIGHT, and other Poems. Being a Selection from the Poetical Works of James Thomson ("B.V.") London: Bertram Dobell, 77 Charing Cross Road, W.C. 1899. 16mo, pp. xx and 256.

[This volume was issued in response to the demand for a cheaper and more popular issue of the poems of "B.V." than was supplied in the complete edition of the "Poetical Works." The book contains a representative selection from the poems of James Thomson; and the reader who possesses it will have sufficient material for forming an estimate of the real value and significance of the author's poetical work. There is a brief "Preface" to the volume, written by the editor.]

ROSEMARY AND PANSIES. The Author Bertram Dobell [Motto.] 1901. (Not for sale.) 8vo, pp. viii and 88.

[Of this volume only seventy-five copies were printed for private circulation. A good many copies were presented to eminent literary men, most of whom, in acknowledging the receipt of the volume, wrote very kind and encouraging letters to the author. No doubt (as usually happens with a first volume of verse) the book contains some things which the author does not now regard so favourably as he did when he printed them; but since he reprinted most of the contents of the volume four years later, it is to be concluded that he is not altogether ashamed of his juvenilia. (If anyone objects to the use of the last word on the score that the author was not very far short of sixty when the book was issued, he would, it is to be supposed, reply that they were his juvenile productions as an author, if not as a man). So few copies having been printed the book must necessarily become scarce, though it may not also become valuable.]

ROSEMARY AND PANSIES. By Bertram Dobell. [Motto.] London: Published by the Author, 77 Charing Cross Road, W.C. 1904. Cr. 8vo, pp. x and 131.

[Of this volume five hundred ordinary copies were printed, and fifty on handmade paper. It is now nearly "out of print." The book was favourably noticed—in some cases very favourably noticed—by the reviewers.]

A PROSPECT OF SOCIETY. By Oliver Goldsmith. Being the earliest form of his poem "The Traveller." Now first reprinted from the unique original; with a Reprint of the first edition of "The Traveller." Edited by Bertram Dobell. Sq. 12mo, pp. xvi, 16, viii, 22 and vi.

[See p. 26 for a reference to the above work.]

SIDELIGHTS ON CHARLES LAMB. By Bertram Dobell. [Motto.] London: Published by the Author, 77 Charing Cross Road, W.C.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1903. Cr. 8vo, frontispiece (facsimile of Lamb's handwriting), pp. xxi and 371.

[See pp. 9-12.]

THE POETICAL WORKS OF THOMAS TRAHERNE, B.D., 1636?-1674. Now first published from the Original Manuscripts. Edited by Bertram Dobell. With a Memoir of the Author. [Mottoes.] London: Published by the Editor, 77 Charing Cross Road, W.C. 1903. 4to, frontispiece (facsimile of Traherne's handwriting), pp. xcii and 168.

[See pp. 13-21. Of this work a second edition in cr. 8vo, pp. xcvi and 187, was issued in 1906.]

ESSAYS, DIALOGUES AND THOUGHTS (OPERETTE MORALI AND PENSIERI) OF GIACOMO LEOPARDI. Translated by James Thomson ("B.V."), Author of "The City of Dreadful Night," etc. Edited by Bertram Dobell, Author of "Sidelights on Charles Lamb," "Rosemary and Pansies," etc. London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd.; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 16mo, pp. xxvi and 389.

[Perhaps there never were two poets whose genius and whose fate were more remarkably akin than those of Leopardi and James Thomson. It was very fitting that the English poet should have devoted himself to the task of translating the prose works of the great Italian into his own language. He did not attempt to translate Leopardi's poems, deeming it impossible to do justice to their great qualities in translation. Since Thomson's death several writers (including Sir Theodore Martin) have attempted the task, but with very little success. Though published at the low price of one shilling, Thomson's translation of the prose works of Leopardi is (so far) much the completest, and also (I think) the faithfullest of the various English renderings.]

CATALOGUE OF BOOKS PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION. Collected by Bertram Dobell, and now described and annotated by him. London, 1906: Published by the Author, 77 Charing Cross Road, W.C. 8vo, pp. 238.

[Although this work in its complete form was not published until 1906, the idea of it had occurred to me more than twenty years before, and its publication in parts was commenced in 1890. Because it seemed to me a thing that ought to be done, I devoted much time and labour to it, well knowing that I could not possibly derive any pecuniary advantage from it. When I conceived the plan of this work the idea of printing a bare list of names and titles had no attraction for me. Many books have titles so vague and misleading that they give no help to those who wish to know what is the nature of their contents. Therefore it seemed to me that it would be a good thing to give, in addition to the titles of the books, some notice of their character and contents. I also thought that by quoting occasional passages from the books noticed, the unattractive nature of the ordinary catalogue would be much lessened. In short, I desired to produce a bibliography which might be read, and not merely consulted.]

THE POETICAL WORKS OF WILLIAM STRODE (1600-1645). Now first collected from manuscript and printed sources; to which is added THE FLOATING ISLAND, a Tragi-Comedy, now first printed from the original edition of 1655. Edited by Bertram Dobell. With a Memoir of the Author. London: Published by the Editor, Charing Cross Road, W.C. 1907. Sm. 4to, pp. lvi and 270.

[See pp. 21-25.]

THE PARTIAL LAW. A Tragi-Comedy, by an unknown Author (*circa* 1615-30). Now first printed from the original manuscript. Edited by Bertram Dobell. [Motto.] London: Published by the Editor, 77 Charing Cross Road, W.C. 1908.

[The following passages are extracted from a notice by Mr. W. W. Greg of the above work:—"Mr. Dobell is to be congratulated on this addition to his finds in seventeenth-century literature. While by no means a great play it is extremely well-constructed in the exaggerated style of adventurous romance, and is eminently readable. Preserved in a professional scribe's copy, with a few presumably autograph corrections, it offers few clues of authorship. I am inclined to agree with the editor that it is not the work of any recognised dramatist, but rather of one of the courtly amateurs of Charles' reign. He was, however, a very able amateur. Granted that, the construction would be by no means beyond his powers, and itself perhaps suggests rather the ease of the study than the more ready methods of the professional writers. The composition is by no means inept either as regards verse or style, though the author occasionally allows himself rather startling liberties in metre and grammar alike. The plot has a resemblance to that of 'Much Ado about Nothing,' though whether the author was aware that he was using the same material as Shakespeare may be doubted. His direct source seems to be the Ariodante and Ginevra episode in the fifth canto of the 'Orlando Furioso.' On the other hand, as Mr. Dobell points out, there is pretty clear evidence of familiarity with 'Pericles' and possibly 'As you Like it.' There also occur a few Shakespearian phrases, but these may have already been current."]

CENTURIES OF MEDITATIONS. By Thomas Traherne (1636?-1674). Now first printed from the original manuscript. Edited by Bertram Dobell. [Motto.] London: Published by the Editor, 77 Charing Cross Road, W.C. 1908. Cr. 8vo, pp. xxx and 342.

[See pp. 18-21.]

A CENTURY OF SONNETS. By Bertram Dobell, Author of "Rosemary and Pansies," "Sidelights on Charles Lamb," etc., and Editor of the Works of Thomas Traherne, William Strode, and James Thomson ("B.V.")

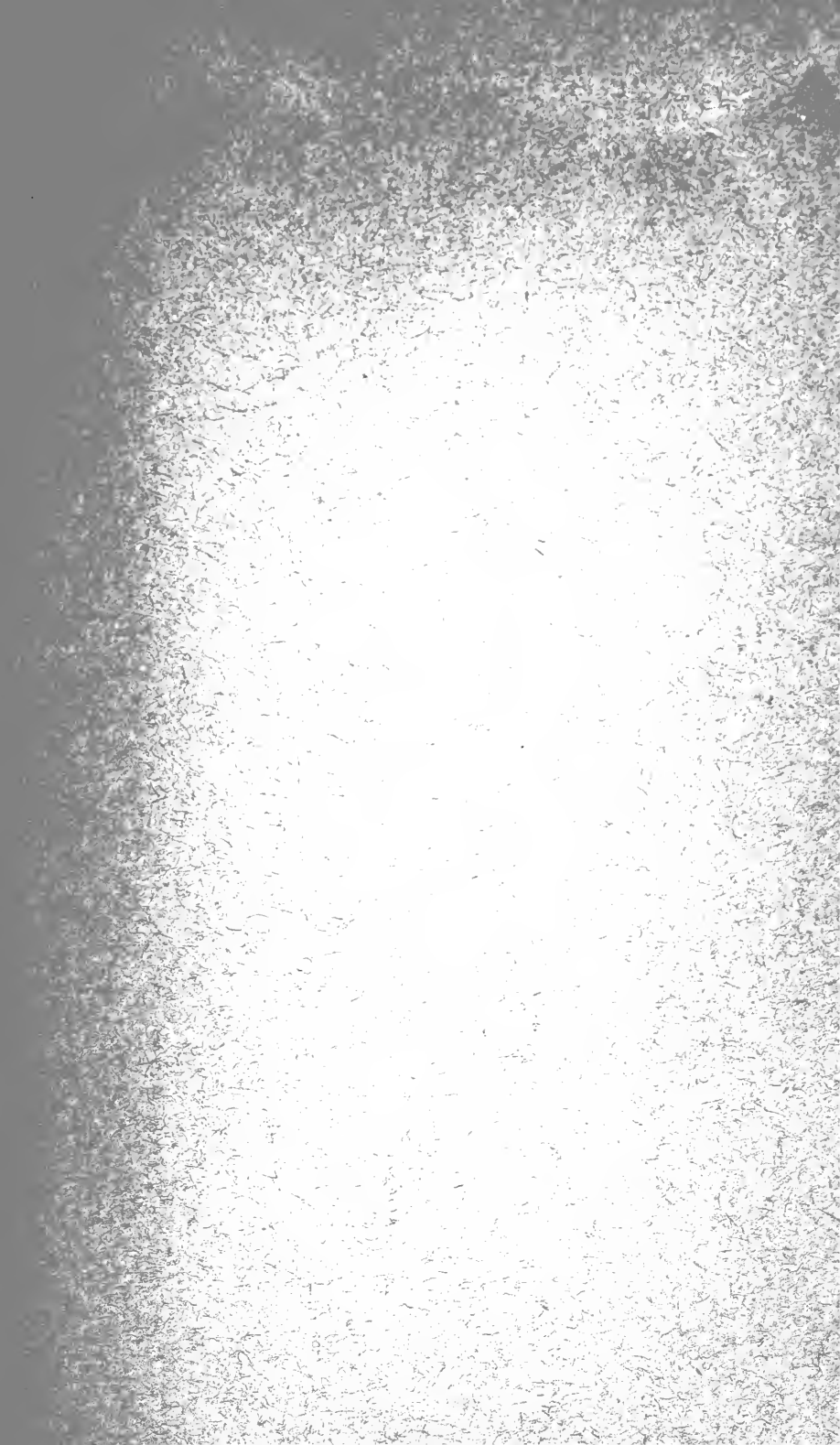
[This work is now in the press, and will be published very shortly.]

THE CITY OF DREADFUL NIGHT, and other Poems. Being a Selection from the Poetical Works of James Thomson ("B.V.") New Edition.

[The first edition of this book (see p. 30) having been exhausted, a new edition is now in the press, and will be published very shortly.]

Besides the above separate publications, Mr. Dobell has from time to time contributed articles on literary subjects to various periodicals, including the "Athenæum," "Notes and Queries," "Quarterly Review," etc.





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